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# ADDRESS

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PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

OF

GENERAL ULYSSES S. GRANT

BEFORE

U. S. GRANT POST, No. 28, G. A. R.

DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS,  
GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC, U. S. A.

FEBRUARY 26, 1903

BY

COMRADE GENERAL JOHN C. SMITH,

EX-LIEUT. GOVERNOR.



173 22  
G. W. Mason

COMMANDER AND COMRADES OF U. S. GRANT  
POST, No. 28, GRAND ARMY OF THE  
REPUBLIC, CHICAGO, ILL.

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On my appointment by Commander Henry McCall as Historian of this Post, an appointment I innocently understood to be that of Orator, I had intended giving you a brief address on my personal knowledge of the great soldier whose honored name this Post bears.

Ill health prevented my doing so at our Annual Meeting in December last, and I now embrace the first opportunity of my convalescence, to talk to you of one whose memory we all cherish; one whom the verdict of history places so high on the roll of military chieftains and who, in my judgment, was the greatest soldier the Anglo-Saxon race has ever produced.

In our estimate of military commanders it is essential that we take into consideration the intelligence of the soldier, the number of men commanded, weapons used, area of field of operation and above all the skill, strategy, endurance and bravery of the opposing forces.

Two million or more men were enlisted for the war of 1861-65, and the rank and file of no army in the history of the world was ever composed of men of the high intelligence which characterized those composing the armies of the Union, or, were ever so well armed.

Measured by the intellect of the men and the arms they bore, the soldiers of the federal armies were the equal of any ten million that could have been mustered one century ago, while for bravery and endurance the confederate or opposing forces had never been surpassed.

The Union troops were organized into twenty-five infantry corps to which were attached the artillery and cavalry commands, and they into three principal and six lesser armies.

Our great Captain, while operating in person with the greater of these armies known as the Army of the Potomac, directed the movements of all the armies, covering in their operation an empire in area of more than two thousand miles from East to West and one thousand from North to South.

To such a command came Ulysses S. Grant, than whom no commander ever moved with more celerity, captured more prisoners or destroyed more armies in the two years from Vicksburg to Appomattox, the crowning victory of his splendid career.

On becoming a resident of Galena in 1854 my business and social relations soon made me acquainted with Jesse R. Grant and Simpson S. Grant, the father and brother of Captain Ulysses S. Grant, then in the old army. A younger brother, Orville L., came to Galena a few years later and I soon became intimate with him.

From the father, whom we affectionately called "Uncle Jesse," and the two brothers, I came to know Captain Grant before he removed to Galena, which was in the early spring of 1860.

At that time "Uncle Jesse" and his two sons were engaged in the harness and leather furnishing business under the firm name of "Jesse R. Grant & Sons."

The Captain, who had been living in and near St. Louis since his resignation from the army, in 1854, was asked by his father to come to Galena and take an interest in the store. The father intending to retire and give place to his son, but the political excitement of the time, the unsettled condition of business and the ill health of Simpson delayed the transfer and the Captain entered upon duty as a clerk in their well known store. During the summer and fall Captain Grant was employed in the sale of goods and buying of hides which were shipped to Covington, Kentucky, where the father resided and thence to the tanneries, and when tanned, returned to Galena. During the winter of 1860-1 the purchase and shipment of cattle and hogs were added to the business of the house, in all of which the Captain took an active part.

From the time Captain Grant came to live in Galena until the firing of the first gun of the rebellion, he was known to but few, and they very largely the men who did business with the house of Jesse R. Grant & Sons or were on terms of friendship with the members of the firm.

No one in that city bore a better character for uprightness and fair dealing in trade than Captain Grant, and no man was better known for sobriety, industry and general intelligence than he of whom I now speak.

All the stories attributing idleness, shiftlessness or use of intoxicants to Captain Grant while a resident of Galena are false and would not be referred to here

but for the recent article in a city newspaper retailing those old and baseless slanders.

Educated at West Point and with an observing mind broadened by experience in the Mexican War in which no one of equal rank won more honor, Captain Grant came to Galena. Such was the Captain's reputation that in the debates of a local club and the political discussions of 1860, vexed questions were referred to him and his opinion or decision was accepted.

In this way our future General became acquainted with John A. Rawlins, a young and rising lawyer, who was the Douglas Elector for that district, and who afterwards became his chief of staff, a major-general and Secretary of War of the United States.

With Ely S. Parker, Superintendent of the construction of the Galena Post Office and Marine Hospital buildings and the Post Office and Custom House building at Dubuque, Iowa, a full blood Indian of the Seneca tribe, and chief of the Six Nations of Northern New York, afterwards a Brigadier General and Military Secretary of the Old Commander, and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. General Parker's Indian name was Do-ne-ho-ga-wa, which signifies "The Keeper of the West Gate." He was the grand nephew of Red Jacket, the famous Indian Chief and Orator of the Six Nations of Northern New York, and the friend of General Washington.

William R. Rowley, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Jo Daviess County, later a Brigadier General and Provost Marshal on Grant's staff.

John E. Smith, then Treasurer of Jo Daviess County, who later became a Major General and one of



the bravest Division Commanders of that Grand Old Army of the Tennessee, to which the rebel stronghold, Vicksburg, finally surrendered.

Jasper A. Maltby, a gunsmith, who had seen service in Mexico, and who became a brigadier in the war so soon to follow.

All of these have answered the long roll, and are now bivouacked on the other shore. There remains one other to name who also, from a private citizen, arose to the rank of Major General in that same army and who is still spared to us and whom so many of you know. I refer to General Augustus L. Chetlain, now of this city.

Men of such probity, official and social standing in private life and who rose to such high military rank in that great war of the rebellion, were the associates of Captain Grant in Galena in 1860-1.

Asked to accept the position of Orderly Sergeant of a company of Wide Awakes by a committee of the most influential citizens of Galena, the Captain quietly declined, saying:

“Gentlemen, I thank you for your kind offer, and while I favor such organizations, believing them to be of benefit to the young men, I cannot accept the position. My reason for declining is that, having held a commission as Captain in the army of the United States, I do not think it becoming in me now to serve a citizen body, though semi-military, as its orderly sergeant.”

This decision, however, did not deter the Captain from occasionally meeting with the boys and drilling the company in its facings and marchings, as his sym-

pathies were with the Republicans and he desired the election of Mr. Lincoln.

You all remember how your blood boiled as the electric wires flashed the news of the bombardment of Fort Sumter on that 12th day of April, 1861, when was fired that shot which "was heard around the world," followed on the 15th by the proclamation of the immortal Lincoln calling for 75,000 men to save this Union, and how you sprang to arms. A meeting was called in Galena, as meetings were called throughout the loyal states, to sustain the President and enlist troops. Captain Grant presided at that meeting and the principal speakers were Hon. E. B. Washburne, Republican member of Congress, John A. Rawlins, Douglas Elector, and Bushrod B. Howard, Breckenridge postmaster, afterwards a Captain in the 19th Illinois, who was killed in the service of his country.

I well remember going to that meeting with John A. Rawlins, William R. Rowley, John C. Spare and Jasper A. Maltby, and I never shall forget the answer John A. Rawlins made to some political associate as we entered the court house. This man had urged him not to go upstairs to the court-room, saying: "John, you don't want to go up there and talk to that crowd; it is a ——— black Republican meeting." Turning to the speaker, his face aglow with the intense fire of patriotism, Rawlins replied: "I am going up to the court-room and I intend to make a speech. We are going to have a great war, and in time of war there are no Democrats or Republicans, there can be but two parties now, one of patriots and the other of traitors."

He did go into that meeting and his soul-stirring speech did more than that of any other man toward filling the first company of volunteers which Galena sent to the war, and of which General Chetlain was the first Captain.

Of Captain Grant's efforts to get into the service of his country, the tender of the same by letter to Col. L. Thomas, then Adjutant General, U. S. A., which was never answered; his visit to Cincinnati to see General McClellan, who gave him no audience, and his return discouraged to Galena, I need not now speak, but of his going to Springfield and appointment by Governor Yates, our great war Governor, to the Colonelcy of the 21st Regiment, Illinois Infantry Volunteers. I will give you the facts as I personally know them. To our late Comrade General John E. Smith, General Grant was indebted for the presentation of his name to Gov. Yates and his subsequent assignment to duty in the office of Adjutant General Thomas Mather at Springfield, Illinois.

John E. Smith, then County Treasurer of Jo Daviess County, afterwards Colonel of the Forty-fifth Regiment, Illinois Infantry Volunteers, and Major General, U. S. A., being then on the staff of Governor Richard Yates. He was called to Springfield to assist in the organization of the ninety-day troops, called for in the President's proclamation. And to him alone is due the honor of having called the Governor's attention to Captain Grant, and it was brought about in this way:

As Colonel Smith was leaving Galena he met Captain Grant, who repeated to him what he had so often

said before: "I would like to secure a position in the service. The government educated me, and in the event of a war I want to re-enter the army and serve my country. I would be pleased, if the opportunity presents itself, that you would say this to Governor Yates." Colonel Smith assured the Captain he would, and they parted.

Reaching Springfield, the Colonel was soon at work in the Adjutant General's office, assisting in the enrollment of troops then gathering at "Camp Dick Yates." A few days later Governor Yates came into the office from the camp and in a bad humor. Everything in camp was in confusion, the men lawless and insubordinate, and upon the Governor being asked the cause of the trouble, he replied:

"This trouble grows out of the effort to assign the companies daily reporting for organization into what they call regiments, and there is no one in camp or anywhere else that I know who has any idea as to what a regiment is or how organized." Addressing Colonel Smith, Governor Yates asked: "Do you know anything about organizing a regiment?" The Colonel promptly answered: "No, Governor, I never saw a full regiment in my life."

This was true of almost every man in civil life in 1861, and also true of many of the officers of the old army at that time. Our military establishment had been so small for forty or more years, that with the exception of the Mexican war, no regiment had been together at any post in our country.

Again addressing the Colonel, Governor Yates asked: "Do you know of any one who does?" to

which the Colonel promptly answered: "Yes, Governor, I do; Captain Grant, who lives in Galena, is a graduate of West Point, was a Captain in the regular army, and saw service in Mexico. He knows the organization of a regiment, and he has frequently told me that in the event of a war he would like to re-enter the service, as it was his duty to serve the government which had educated him. He also requested me, as I was leaving home, to say so to you, if the opportunity presented itself, and I am glad you mentioned the subject."

This conversation resulted in Governor Yates directing Colonel Smith to write to Captain Grant and request that he come immediately to Springfield. Grant did so, going there with Captain Chetlain's company from Galena. It was during the time that Captain Grant was assisting Adjutant General Mather that Governor Yates received urgent requests for troops to be sent to Missouri, which, for lack of transportation, he was unable to do. One day, in consultation with Jesse K. Dubois, a man of sterling worth and the Auditor of Public Accounts, the Governor spoke of the urgent need of troops in Missouri and the difficulty in obtaining transportation, concluding by asking the advice of "Uncle Jesse."

The Auditor made several suggestions, excellent, but of no avail, when he finally said: "There is a Captain Grant in General Mather's office who has been a soldier and I like his style. I would suggest that you send for him and ask his advice."

To this the Governor agreed. Captain Grant was sent for, the situation explained to him, and he

was asked what was best to be done. The Captain reflected a moment and then quietly said to the Governor:

"The situation is perplexing, Governor, but if I was commanding one of those regiments I would take it to Missouri." "How?" asked the Governor, laying before the Captain the telegraphic answers of the Illinois Central and Chicago & Alton railroad companies, in which they assured the Governor of their inability to furnish any more trains for want of cars or engines. "How, in the face of those dispatches, could you take a regiment to Missouri?" Captain Grant was again asked.

"I would march it there," replied that quiet, unassuming man.

Such an idea as soldiers marching through the State of Illinois to Missouri, or to any other state, had never been thought of by Governor Yates or any one else at that time, as all troops had been moved by rail into the border states, but it caused the Governor to reflect.

Captain Grant and Colonel Smith returned home for a brief time, the one soon to be summoned to accept the Colonelcy of the Twenty-first Regiment, Illinois Volunteer Infantry, and the other to follow with the Forty-fifth, known as the "Washburne Lead Mine" regiment.

Colonel Grant did march his regiment to the Illinois River, where he was halted to meet a steamer, but the steamer failing to arrive, the regiment was then taken across the state by rail, to Missouri, where it did duty for a brief time on the Hannibal and St. Joe railroad.

To you, my old comrades, who followed the great Commander from his first battle at Belmont, Missouri, November 7, 1861, to Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, Chattanooga and through the wilderness, to his crowning victory at Appomattox, Court House, Virginia, April 9, 1865, it is unnecessary for me to rehearse his battles for you were a part of the same, and you know that no commander ever more readily assumed to himself the blame for failure or more cheerfully accorded to his soldiers all the honor for his success than did General Ulysses S. Grant.

Devoted to his army, with the most implicit confidence in the rank and file, that silent man kept his own counsel, steadily pursued the enemy until victory crowned his efforts when by the superior intelligence of you men, your bravery and skill in arms, the enemy was defeated and our Union preserved.

You all remember how, after Grant's glorious victory at Donelson, the General was relieved from duty, but you may not know the reason. Grant was commanding an army operating west of the Cumberland River and Buell one on the east, their department lines not being established when Fort Donelson surrendered. Nashville was exposed. Grant ordered troops to occupy that city and proceeded there himself. He thus unknowingly entered territory claimed by Buell upon whose complaint to Halleck and Halleck's to General McClellan, then commanding all the armies of the United States, the arrest of General Grant was authorized and he was relieved of his command, which he only regained

at Pittsburg Landing through the illness of Gen. C. F. Smith. Had Grant been then in command of both armies or not been bound by undefined lines, he would have marched his victorious army to Nashville, thrown detached commands to Chattanooga, Knoxville, Atlanta and Memphis, for there was no organized force in his front, there established rallying points for the Union men of those States and recruited at least one-fourth of the men who afterwards were driven by force of public sentiment or conscription into the rebel army.

To keep Grant after Donelson fell from occupying Nashville, was as absurd as to have said to St. Peter who holds the keys of the gates of Heaven "Thou shalt not enter therein." But such was McClellan's decision and Grant, like the true soldier he was, quietly acquiesced.

Silent and taciturn as was our great commander when the conversation was light or of no interest, he was the most terse yet fluent conversationalist I ever knew, when interested. Walking with General Grant from my own home in Galena to his residence on the east side of the river, soon after his return from that famous tour around the world, in the short space of fifteen or twenty minutes he related to me all the salient points of interest in that triumphal journey through other lands. Seated one day with our old commander when President, in the Cabinet room at the White House, where he detained me several hours to inquire about Galena and old friends, after telling of the many who had removed and the friends who had died, the President said: "Why, General Smith, if these changes continue Galena, I fear, will soon lose



its identity and become like the barrel belonging to a family in Vermont that Senator Luke Poland likes to tell about. Apples were ripe and the season for hard cider was on, when a barrel was brought out which it was claimed had been in the Whitcomb family from the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers, to see if it was still sound enough to be filled with cider. The older members of the family cherished the barrel while the younger cared nothing for it and a new stave being necessary a council was called to ascertain how much of the original remained. One old uncle told of a new stave here and there, a grandmother of new hoops, while a venerable grandfather told of new heads, and so it went on until summing up the evidence it was decided that all which remained of the Mayflower barrel was the bung hole, and the President smiled as he told me the story. I was amused and quietly remarked: "Mr. President, should I ever wish to leave Galena and desire a federal appointment elsewhere, I trust you will not think Galena has reached the condition of Senator Poland's barrel and I be all that remains of it.

The President had a hearty laugh over the story and my suggestion. That my request would have been granted I have evidence in the fact that on the President being informed by Mr. L. S. Felt of Galena of my illness, and suggesting that a territorial appointment to a warmer climate might benefit me, my name was sent to the United States Senate and I was confirmed the same day, March 20, 1874, as Register of a new land office at La Mesilla, New Mexico. The first information I had of this appointment was an order

from Willis Drummond, Commissioner, to file a bond of \$10,000 and proceed to that far distant post and assume the duties of the office.

As I had not sought the office, I thanked the President for his remembrance of me and declined, saying: "Though in ill health, should I accept, it was possible I might gain strength on the 'mutton and garlic' of the Rio Grande Valley, but it was doubtful if I was young enough to live until civilization reached me and the territory became a state." The latter objection seems to hold good to this day. Having declined this appointment the President soon after offered me a special mission to Mexico, but not wishing to leave Illinois this was also declined.

It was at this same sitting in the Cabinet room that I soon discovered the President was holding me to freeze out the many importuning him for office and I was forcibly reminded of his memory of persons and appointments. A member of Congress from Virginia, coming in and charging the President with appointment of "carpet-baggers" to the federal offices in his district, demanded their removal and other appointments. To this the President replied, naming the Federal Judges, Collector of Port, Collector of Internal Revenue, Naval Officer, U. S. Marshal and others, saying: "If you will tell me which one of these officers is not a native Virginian, or has not resided in the State long enough to be accepted as one, I will find a place for those you recommend." The M. C. was silent and the interview ended.

Going to Washington in the interest of Mr. Huntington, the Postmaster of Galena, I accompanied Mr. Bur-  
 chard, the member from that district and the Illinois  
 delegation, to the White House to urge his reappoint-  
 ment, they fearing if a change was made in this case  
 there would be others in their own districts. After all  
 had recommended and urged, the President quietly re-  
 plied: "Gentlemen, the people suppose that I make all  
 these appointments and hold me responsible for the con-  
 duct of these officers, while, in fact, you gentlemen  
 make them. I think it hard if I cannot have the ap-  
 pointment of the Postmaster of my own city. It is my  
 intention to appoint Mr. Houghton," and he did.

General Grant was upright in all his dealings and a  
 lover of justice to all men. Having the courage of his  
 convictions he dared to "change front" and reverse his  
 rulings and opinions on subsequent evidence being pre-  
 sented. A most notable instance of this kind was in  
 the General Fitz John Porter case where he believed  
 from the evidence given before the military commis-  
 sion. General Porter was guilty of disobedience of  
 Orders at Groveton. In this case General Grant had,  
 when President, refused Porter a rehearing and after  
 his term expired recommended the same to his suc-  
 cessor, and to no one more than General Grant was  
 Fitz John Porter indebted for his restoration to the  
 army. Meeting General Grant on Broadway, near  
 Wall St., New York City, shortly after the General's  
 recommendation, my wife and myself were invited to  
 his office near by. We accepted and I there had a long  
 talk with the General on the Fitz John Porter case, he

ably presenting his views, to which I replied: "General, I only recall my feelings at the time of the battle of Groveton and the finding of the Court Martial. I then thought him guilty. I think so still, though I have read 'The Army under Pope,' by John C. Rope." Taking up a book from his desk and handing it to me General Grant said: "I, too, have been reading the same book and here is a copy. Mr. Rope began his investigation of this subject, believing General Porter guilty of disobedience of General Pope's and McDowell's orders and ended satisfied that Porter was right or justified in his disobedience and that he should be restored to the army." To this I said: "General Grant, I would not assume to put my judgment against yours, but I will say this: General Fitz John Porter was informed that his line of march led him in on the enemy's right flank and he was ordered to attack on that flank, and if possible the enemy's rear. Porter learned from his advanced post that Longstreet's command was passing Thoroughfare Gap closing upon Stonewall Jackson and still he did not attack. I want to ask you if that be true, if it was not doubly imperative upon General Porter to attack the enemy?" To this General Grant replied: "General Smith, I do not understand the situation as you do." Then I said: "General, I would have been very sorry to have commanded a division under the same circumstances with orders from you to fight and not have obeyed the order." To which Grant smiled and I then said: "General, I see we cannot agree; I bow to your superior judgment and will say this, on which I think we can agree. General Porter and some other officers of the army of the Potomac were not loyal

to their commander, General John Pope." To this General Grant assented with a firm "Yes. We will agree that he was not loyal to his commander." And there the subject ended. Meeting General Pope subsequent to this and telling him of my conversation with General Grant, which pleased him very much, he asked me if I would not write him a letter giving the subject as I related, which I did and he thanked me for it.

For quiet, terse and unanswerable responses to questions and subjects presented to him General Grant was unexcelled. There was nothing more to be said after the General spoke. Witness the following: During the President's advocacy of the Santo Domingo Annexation in 1871 when the feeling for and against the measure was intense in the United States Senate, a member of that body discussing the question with the President expressed his surprise that one whom it was thought should be in favor of the treaty was violently and unfairly opposing it, and regretting as he did this action he was more than surprised and pained to learn that the member spoken of was an infidel and did not believe in the Bible. "Are you not surprised to learn this, Mr. President?" asked his visitor. "No," replied the President. "Why, Mr. President?" asked the Senator. "Because he didn't write it," quietly answered Grant.

When being asked if he did not think he had made a mistake in forcing his campaign to Richmond, through the wilderness and that he should have taken McClellan's plan and gone up the James River to Richmond, our old Commander said, "Perhaps I should. I have often thought of the subject and that I ought to

have taken the James River, but after all conclude that I was right, as I got Richmond and McClellan didn't." And there the subject ended. Such was the quiet, inoffensive and yet conclusive answer to all questions put to the General, many more of which might here be related, but time will not permit and I fear your patience has already been overtaxed. A few more minutes and I am done.

When Grant became President in 1869 and there was a vacancy in the head of the army, we all looked for the promotion of Sherman from Lieutenant General to General, but who was to be made Lieutenant General was the question with the old soldiers.

Grant and Sherman having come from the army of the Tennessee, the position was conceded to the Potomac or Cumberland armies. The soldiers of the Potomac named General George G. Meade, while those of the Cumberland presented General George H. Thomas, "the Rock of Chickamauga." Judge of the surprise of all when the President named General Philip H. Sheridan. Upon being asked why he did so the President quietly replied:

"I would like to have appointed General Meade because he earned it. I would like to have appointed General Thomas because he deserved it, but there was but one Lieutenant General to commission and there was but one Sheridan."

General Grant had a high opinion of the military skill of Sheridan and an affection for him which was warmly returned, and yet each had such a sense of justice as would not permit a wrong to be done another though it were their own gain. Grant had recommended

Generals Meade and Sheridan for promotion to rank of Major General of the regular army. Meade for his splendid handling of the army of the Potomac on the march and in battle and Sheridan for his glorious victories in the Shenandoah. Under the great pressure of those strenuous days the President was unable for some time to take up Grant's recommendations, and when he did Sheridan was appointed a Major General, U. S. A., November 14, 1864, to rank as such from November 8, 1864, and General Grant was so informed. This was a surprise to the Lieutenant General, as he had intended to have Meade rank Sheridan. "Little Phil" was sent for, the wishes of Grant made known, and the situation explained. Meade ranked Sheridan as a brigadier more than one year, was the able commander of the largest army in the field and General Grant could not permit an act of such injustice to be done him though it were for one so deserving as Sheridan.

Our gallant "Little Phil," with an equal desire to do right and have justice done a comrade, magnanimously said, "General Grant, say nothing of this to General Meade. I will waive rank and serve under him until you can have this matter righted."

General Grant advised President Lincoln of the situation and again made his recommendation which resulted in the appointment November 26, 1864, of George G. Meade as a Major General U. S. A., to rank from August 18, 1864. Can you conceive a more unselfish or honorable act than that of Grant and Sheridan or do you wonder that when a new promotion was open in which seniority was not a factor that Sheridan was selected?

The United States Senate afterwards confirmed these ranks and the dates named, General Sheridan's January 13, 1865, and General Meade's February 1, 1865.

That our old Commander whose honored name this Grand Army Post bears loved his country is attested by his services in behalf of the Union and universal freedom. That he loved its starry flag under which he had fought upon a hundred and more battlefields in the great rebellion and Mexico is illustrated in the following incident. In the political campaign of 1868 I was in command of the organization of "Tanners" in Galena and having purchased a forty-foot garrison flag had it swung from my office across Main Street with a piece of muslin a yard or more wide sewed to the lower end, upon which was painted "Grant and Colfax." I was pleased with it. General Grant was at home, and walking up the street with him one bright day I called his attention to the flag, eulogizing its beautiful stripes and bright stars when, halting and pointing to our starry banner, General Grant said: "General Smith, I wish you would have that flag taken down, or those names taken off it; there is no name so great that it should be placed upon the flag of our country."

The strip of muslin bearing the honored names of Grant and Colfax was taken off, the flag again thrown to the breeze unmarked and in all its pristine beauty.









